

Emptiness - 'when tommy came home'

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Summary

When Tommy was 13, he saw killing himself as a logical way to make sure his siblings and mum and cousins had enough food to eat. To make sure there were enough beds in their tiny house or before that, their boat.

Tommy's relationship with suicide, and how it changes over the years, and how he's managed to stay alive thanks to ada and freddie!

Notes

major talk of suicide, look after yourself everyone! please don't read if it's going to be bad for you

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

When Tommy was 13, he saw killing himself as a logical way to make sure his siblings and mum and cousins had enough food to eat. To make sure there were enough beds in their tiny house or before that, their boat. He didn't connect the idea of killing himself to *suicide*, but simply as a solution to a problem. Eh was standing on the bridge over the canal with weights he'd stolen from somewhere in Charlie's yard on his legs. He was about to jump when Charlie found him.

He was practically on suicide watch for weeks, but Tommy never understood why. He didn't want to die, but he'd rather die himself than let his family starve or freeze. It never made sense. His father, of course, never treated him like he was fragile like everyone else. He'd encouraged him to finish the job, because a 'real Shelby' doesn't half-do something. He'd also called him a coward and beat him into next week.

There was a point in France when Tommy realised there was hardly a point in surviving. He'd lost half himself already and didn't see a point clinging on to the rest of it. It had been the middle of the night, after a 16-hour shift of tunneling, and Tommy had been too tired to sleep, full of nervous energy he couldn't dissipate. Freddie had found him in a digout with a gun to his head. They'd spent an hour talking, and Freddie had refused to leave until he was sure Tommy was 'safe'. Of course, he could never fully trust Tommy with that, and there was always the chance of him happening to get shot the next day.

But he didn't. Tommy didn't die, despite everything telling him he should have.

But Freddie, again, found him the day after the armistice, in a tunnel with a gun against his head, silent tears down his face. His lighter on the floor was the only way Freddie could see him this far into the tunnel. "What you doing down here, Tom? Thought you'd never want to be back in one of these?" He'd almost talked him down, until he'd heard shouting and scrambling above, and the ground above him had shaken slightly. It had sent him into a frenzy, and Freddie had managed to pull the gun from his head before he had a chance to pull the trigger.

The week he'd gotten home, Tommy fell into some sort of depression. He couldn't get out of bed in the day, practically begging, but mostly guilt, Ada and Pol to get him whiskey in bottle-fulls from the Garrison, in the promise that it helped him sleep, and the look in his eyes told them it was the only thing stopping him from a bullet between the eyes. Of course, it couldn't stop it forever. He'd drank himself into a stupor and found painkillers in the kitchen from some illness of another, and poured every one of them into his hand. Freddie, terrified, had told Ada about what happened in France, and Ada, even more terrified, had rushed to Tommy's room in just the right time to talk him down. He'd broken down in tears, something of a rarity for Tommy, and they'd hugged for hours while Ada talked him out of doing something like this.

It hadn't solved the problem. But for a short while, it stopped him resorting to something so permanent to deal with... with everything.

After Grace's death, Ada stopped Tommy again. He'd, again, been drunk out of his mind and back on the smoke and found himself in a top floor window in the unnecessarily large house.

Ada approached slowly that time, afraid of how quickly he could make a rash decision. She'd spoken slowly and calmly, as if she wasn't as scared as she truly was. He'd luckily been too drunk and high to think at all clearly, which meant he couldn't think about the benefits of killing himself hard enough to actually do it. She'd convinced him to come away from the window and had stayed with him until he was tired enough to sleep.

Ada stayed with him for a while after the rally. It had shocked her. From the times she'd stopped him, he'd never actually done it. But an angry Lizzie had told her she'd heard him pull the trigger. But Tommy just couldn't breathe. Seeing Ada barely helped, but it was at least a reprieve. He just couldn't... couldn't breathe or think beyond the physical pain of everything that had broken him. He hadn't tried again, after the time in the field, though it surprised the both of them. He'd fallen into a shutdown he could barely claw himself out of, especially with the news of... of Polly. Tommy just saw it as a reminder of every fucking mistake. Ada chased around him for the following weeks, being excessively kind to him even though she was pregnant and he tried to stop her. She made sure he got at least a few hours of sleep each night, and sat with him on the nights he just couldn't close his eyes for more than a second.

Ada stayed with Tommy from the moment she heard of Ruby's death to the day he practically kicked her out after the funeral. She waited for the moment she'd have to pull him from a ledge or a gun from his head or knife from his hand. But the moment hadn't come like she expected. He didn't fall back to drink – she learnt from Arthur later that he did the day of the funeral, but she was gone by then – and she couldn't smell drugs or the smoke anywhere. They fell into a disturbed equilibrium, where Ada tried to get Tommy to bed each night, but he couldn't rest. Could barely move but couldn't rest. Dead on his feet by the day of the funeral, Lizzie the crutch he was holding onto as they followed the wagon into the yard.

Before the funeral, she'd held him together with everything she had. Didn't think there was a chance of anything else, because he had to be okay. Another kid to look after, the *future of the world* on his shoulders. She had to hold him together; if nothing else, she had to hold him together for Charlie.

That... strange dinner, Ada knew in the back of her mind she wouldn't see Tommy again, that he was going to... to do it for good this time. She knew and... she didn't stop him. In a strange way, she thought he could finally be at peace; perhaps this truly was the only way for him. She didn't stop him. She let him go because she thought this time, it might be right. For him to be with Ruby at last. With Pol and John and Grace, even if he didn't believe in heaven or hell himself. Maybe for the pain in his head to stop forever.

Tommy came home.

Ada definitely thought he wouldn't. She thought he'd be dead by now; no one had heard from him in weeks, and she'd assumed the worst. But he'd knocked on her door one morning, and she'd pulled him in a hug because she didn't know what else to do but hold him together.

End Notes

just in the nick of time! with 3 minutes to go of october, whumptober is complete!!!! it's the first time i've done this - i didn't do it last year - and it's honestly been amazing. very stressful at times - today particularly - but so much fun and especially with my venturing into the Hannibal fandom, i've had so much fun exploring new ideas and even posting a little of my poetry!

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